# THE CONQUEST of CANAAN

By BOOTH TARKINGTON,

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CHAPTER X.

HE woke to the light of morning amazed and full of a strange wonder because he did not know what had amazed him. A chime of bells sounded from a church steeple across the square, ringing out in assured righteousness, summoning the good people who maintained them to come and sit beneath them or be taken to task, and they fell so dismally upon Joe's ear that he bestirred himself and rose, to the delight of his mongrel, who leaped upon him joyfully. An hour later or thereabout the pair emerged from the narrow stairway and stood for a moment, blinking in the fair sunshine, apparently undecided which way to go. The church bells were silent. There was no breeze. The air trembled a little with the deep pipings of the organ across the square, and, save for that, the town was very quiet. The paths which crossed the courthouse yard were flecked with moody shadow, the strong young foliage of the maples not moving, having the air of observing the Sabbath with propriety. The organ ceased to stir the air, and all was in quiet, yet a quiet which for Louden was not peace. He looked at his watch and, without consulting it, spoke the hour aloud. "A quarter past 11." The sound of his own voice gave him a little shock. He rose without knowing why, and as he did so it seemed to him that he heard close to his ear another voice, a woman's, troubled and insistent, but clear and sweet, saying:

"Remember! Across Main street bridge at noon!"

It was so distinct that he started and looked round. Then he laughed. "I'll be seeing circus parades next." His laughter died, for, louder than the ringing in his ears, unmistakably came the strains of a faraway brass band which had no existence on land or sea or in the waters under the earth.

"Here!" he said to the mongrel. "We need a walk, I think. Let's you and me move on before the camels turn the corner."

The music followed him to the street, where he turned westward toward the river, and presently as he walked on, fanning himself with his straw hat, it faded and was gone. But the voice he had heard returned.

"Remember! Across Main street bridge at noon!" it said again close to his ear.

This time he did not start. "All right," he answered, wiping his forehead. "If you'll let me alone, I'll be there."

At a dingy saloon corner near the river a shabby little man greeted him heartily and petted the mongrel. "I'm mighty glad you didn't go, after all, Joe," he added, with a brightening face.

"Go where, Happy?"

Mr. Fear looked grave. "Don't you rec'lect meetin' me last night?"

Louden shook his head. "No. Did I?"

The other's jaw fell, and his brow corrugated with self reproach. "Well, if that don't show what a thick head I am! I thought ye was all right er I'd gone on with ye. Nobody c'd 'a' walked straighter ner talked straighter. Said ye was goin' to leave Canaan fer good and didn't want nobody to know it. Said ye was goin' to take the 'leven o'clock through train fer the west and told me I couldn't come to the deepo with ye. Said ye'd had enough o' Canaan and of everything. I follered ye part way to the deepo, but ye turned and made a motion fer me to go back, and I done it because ye seemed to be kind of in trouble, and I thought ye'd ruther be by yerself. Well, sir, it's one on me."

"Not at all," said Joe. "I was all right."

"Was ye?" returned the other. "Do remember, do ye?"

"Almost," Joe smiled faintly.

"Almost," echoed Happy, shaking his head seriously. "I tell ye, Joe, ef I was you"— he began slowly, then paused and shook his head again. He seemed on the point of delivering some advice, but evidently perceiving the snobbishness of such a proceeding, or else convinced by his own experience of the futility of it, he swerved to cheerfulness:

"I hear the boys is all goin' to work hard fer the primaries. Mike says ye got some chances ye don't know about. He swears ye'll be the next mayor of Canaan."

"Nonsense! Folly and nonsense, Happy! That's the kind of thing I used to think when I was a boy. But now—pshaw!" Joe broke off with a tired laugh. "Tell them not to waste their time! Are you going out to the Beach this afternoon?"

The little man lowered his eyes moodily. "I'll be near there," he said, scraping his patched shoe up and down the curbstone. "That feller's in town ag'in."

"What fellow?"

"'Nashville' they call him. Ed's the name he give the hospital. Cory—him that I soaked the night you come back to Canaan. He's after Claudine to git his evens with me. He's made a raise somewhere's and plays the speader. And her—well, I reckon she's tired waitin' table at the National House, tired o' me, too. I got a hint that they're goin' out to the Beach together this afternoon."

Joe passed his hand wearily over his aching forehead. "I understand," he said, "and you'd better try to. Cory's laying for you, of course. You say he's after your wife? He must have set about it pretty openly if they're going to the Beach today, for there is always a crowd there on Sundays. Is it hard for you to see why he's doing it? It's because he wants to make you jealous. What for? So that you'll tackle him again. And why does he want that? Because he's ready for you!"

The other's eyes suddenly became bloodshot, his nostrils expanding incredibly. "Ready, is he? He better be ready. I"—

"That's enough!" Joe interrupted swiftly. "We'll have no talk like that. I'll settle this for you myself. You send word to Claudine that I want to see her at my office tomorrow morning, and you—you stay away from the Beach today. Give me your word."

Mr. Fear's expression softened. "All right, Joe," he said. "I'll do whatever you tell me to. Any of us 'll do that; we sure know who's our friend."

"Keep out of trouble, Happy." Joe turned to go and they shook hands. "Good day, and—keep out of trouble!"

When he had gone Mr. Fear's countenance again gloomed ominously, and, shaking his head, he ruminatively entered an adjacent bar through the alley door.

The Main street bridge was an old fashioned wooden covered one, dust colored and very narrow, squarely framing the fair open country beyond for the town had never crossed the river. Joe found the cool shadow in the bridge gracious to his hot brow, and through the slender chinks of the worn flooring he caught bright glimpses of running water. When he came out of the other end he felt enough refreshed to light a cigar.

"Well, here I am," he said, "across Main street bridge, and it must be getting on toward noon!" He spoke almost with the aspect of daring and immediately stood still listening. "'Remember,'" he ventured to repeat, again daring—"'remember! Across Main street bridge at noon!'" And again he listened. Then he chuckled faintly with relief, for the voice did not return. "Thank God, I've got rid of that!" he whispered. "And of the circus band too!"

A dusty road turned to the right, following the river and shaded by big sycamores on the bank. The mongrel, intensely preoccupied with this road, scampered away, his nose to the ground. "Good enough," said the master. "Lead on and I'll come after you."

But he had not far to follow. The chase led him to a half hollow lot which lay on a low grass grown levee above the stream where the dog's interest in the pursuit became vividly temporarily, however, for after a few minutes of agitated investigation he was seized with indifference to the whole world, panted briefly, slept. Joe sat upon the log, which was in the shade, and smoked.

For the first time it struck Joe that it was a beautiful day, and it came to him that a beautiful day was a thing which nothing except death, sickness or imprisonment could take from him, not even the ban of Canaan. Unforewarned music sounded in his ears again, but he did not shrink from it now. This was not the circus band he had heard as he left the square, but a melody like a faraway serenade at night as of "the horns of elf land faintly blowing," and he closed his eyes with the sweetness of it.

"Go ahead," he whispered. "Do that all you want to. If you'll keep it up like this awhile, I'll follow with 'Little Brown Jug, How I Love Thee.' It seems to pay after all!"

The welcome strains, however, were but the prelude to a harsher sound which interrupted and annihilated them—the courthouse bell clanging out 12. "All right," said Joe. "It's noon, and I'm 'across Main street bridge.'"

He opened his eyes and looked about him whimsically. Then he shook his head again.

A lady had just emerged from the bridge and was coming toward him.

It would be hard to get at Joe's first impressions of her. We can find conveyance for only the broadest and heaviest. Ancient and modern instances multiply the case of the sleeper who dreams out a long story in accurate color and fine detail, a tale of years, in the opening and shutting of a door. So with Joseph in the brief space of the lady's approach. And with him, as with the sleeper, it must have been—in fact it was—in his recollections later a blur of emotion.

He had little knowledge of the millinery arts, and he needed none to see the harmony—harmony like that of the day he had discovered a little while ago. Her dress and hat and gloves and parasol showed a pale lavender overtint like that which he had seen overspreading the western slope. (Afterward he discovered that the gloves she wore that day were gray and that her hat was for the most part white.) The charm of fabric and tint belonging to what she wore was no shame to her, not being of primal importance beyond herself. It was but the expression of her daintiness and the adjunct of it. She was tall, but if Joe could have spoken or thought of her as "slender" he would have been capable of calling her lips "red," in which case he would not have been Joe and would have been as far from the truth as her lips were from red or as her supreme delicateness was from mere slenderness.

She was to pass him—so he thought—and as she drew nearer his breath came faster.

"Remember! Across Main street bridge at noon!"

Was this the fay of whom the voice had warned him? With that, there befell him the mystery of last night. He did not remember, but it was as if he lived again dimly the highest hour of happiness in a life a thousand years ago; perfume and music, roses, nightingales and plucked harpstrings. Yes, something wonderful was happening to him.

She had stopped directly in front of him—stopped and stood looking at him with her clear eyes. He did not lift his own to hers. He had long experience of the averted gaze of women, but it was not only that. A great shyness beset him. He had risen and removed his hat, trying (ineffectually) not to clear his throat, his every day sense urging upon him that she was a stranger in Canaan who had lost her way—the preposterousness of any one's losing the way in Canaan not just now appealing to his every day sense.

"Can I—can I"— he stammered, blushing miserably, meaning to finish with "direct you," or "show you the way."

Then he looked at her again and saw what seemed to him the strangest sight of his life. The lady's eyes had filled with tears—filled and overfilled.

"I'll sit here on the log with you," she said. And her voice was the voice which he had heard saying: "Remember! Across Main street bridge at noon!"

"What!" he gasped.

"You don't need to dust it!" she went on tremulously. And even then he did not know who she was.

CHAPTER XI.

THERE was a silence, for if the dazzled young man could have spoken at all he could have found nothing to say; and, perhaps, the lady would not trust her own voice just then. His eyes had fallen again. He was too dazed and, in truth, too panic stricken now to look at her, though if he had been quite sure that she was part of a wonderful dream he might have dared. She was seated beside him, and had handed him her parasol in a little way which seemed to imply that of course he had reached for it, so that it was to be seen how used she was to have all tiny things done for her, though this was not then of his tremulous observing. He did perceive, however, that he was to furl the dainty thing. He pressed the catch and let down the top timidly, as if fearing to break or tear it, and as it closed, held near his face, he caught a very faint, sweet, spicy emanation from it like wild roses and cinnamon.

He did not know her, but his timidity and a strange little choke in his throat, the sudden fright which had seized him, were not caused by embarrassment. He had no thought that she was one he had known, but could not for the moment recall. There was nothing of the awkwardness of that. No; he was overpowered by the miracle of this meeting. And yet, while with marveling, he felt it to be so much more touchingly a greater happiness than he had ever known that at first it was inexpressibly sad.

At last he heard her voice again, shaking a little, as she said:

"I am glad you remembered."

"Remembered what?" he faltered.

"Then you don't?" she cried. "And yet you came."

"Came here, do you mean?"

"Yes—now, at noon."

"Ah!" he half whispered, unable to speak aloud. "Was it you who said—who said: 'Remember! Across—across'"—

"'Across Main street bridge at noon!'" she finished for him gently. "Yes."

He took a deep breath in the wonder of it. "Where was it you said that?" he asked slowly. "Was it last night?"

"Don't you even know that you came to meet me?"

"I—came to—to meet—you!"

She gave a little pitying cry, very near a sob, seeing his utter bewilderment.

"It was like the strangest dream in the world," she said. "You were at the station when I came last night. You don't remember at all?"

His eyes downcast, his face burning hotly, he could only shake his head.

"Yes," she continued. "I thought no one would be there, for I had not written to say what train I should take, but when I stepped down from the platform you were standing there, though you didn't see me at first—not until I had called your name and ran to you. You said, 'I've come to meet you,' but you said it queerly, I thought. And then you called a carriage for me. But you seemed so strange. You couldn't tell how you knew that I was coming, and—and then I—I understood you weren't yourself. You were very quiet, but I knew—I knew! So I made you get into the carriage—and—and"—

She faltered to a stop, and with that shame itself brought him courage. He turned and faced her. She had lifted her handkerchief to her eyes, but at his movement she dropped it, and it was not so much the delicate loveliness of her face that he saw then as the tears upon her cheeks.

"Ah, poor boy!" she cried. "I knew! I knew!"

"You—you took me home?"

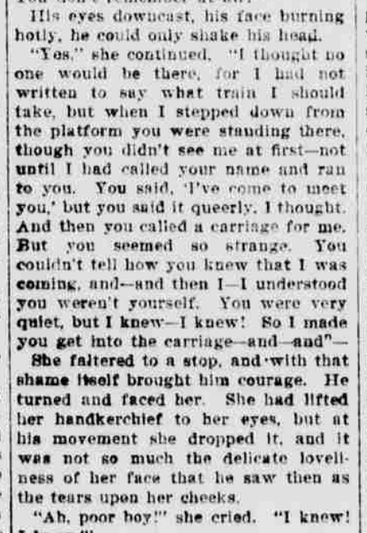
"You told me where you lived," she answered. "Yes, I took you home."

"I don't understand," he stammered huskily. "I don't understand."

She leaned toward him slightly, looking at him with great intentness.

"You didn't know me last night," she said. "Do you know me now?"

For answer he could only stare at her, dumfounded. He lifted an unsteady hand toward her appealingly, but the manner of the lady as she saw the truth underwent an April change.



*"You told me where you lived," she answered.*

She drew back lightly. He was favored with the most delicious low laugh he had ever heard, and by some magic whisk which she accomplished there was no sign of tears about her.

"Ah, I'm glad you're the same, Joe!" she said. "You never would or could pretend very well. I'm glad you're the same, and I'm glad I've changed, though that isn't why you have forgotten me. You've forgotten me because you never thought of me. Perhaps I should not have known you if you had changed a great deal, as I have."

He started, leaning back from her.

"Ah," she laughed, "that's it! That funny little twist of the head you always had, like a—like a—well, you know I must have told you a thousand times that it was like a nice friendly puppy. So why shouldn't I say so now? And your eyebrows! When you look like that nobody could ever forget you, Joe."

He rose from the log, and the mongrel leaped upon him uproariously, thinking they were to go home, belike to food.

The lady laughed again. "Don't let him spoil my parasol. And I must warn you now: Never, never tread on my skirt! I'm very irritable about such things!"

He had taken three or four uncertain backward steps from her. She sat before him, radiant with laughter, the loveliest creature he had ever seen, but between him and this charming vision there swept, through the warm, scented June air, a veil of snow like a driven fog, and half obscured in the heart of it a young girl stood knee deep in a drift piled against an old picket gate, her black waterproof and shabby skirt flapping in the blizzard like torn sails, one of her hands outstretched toward him, her startled eyes fixed on his.

"And, oh, how like you," said the lady; "how like you and nobody else in the world, Joe, to have a yellow dog!"

"Ariel Tabor!"

His lips formed the words without sound.

"Isn't it about time?" she said. "Are strange ladies in the habit of descending from trains to take you home?"

Once, upon a white morning long ago, the sensational progress of a certain youth up Main street had stirred Canaan. But that day was as nothing to this. Mr. Bantry had left temporary paralysis in his wake, but in the case of the two young people who passed slowly along the street today it was petrifaction, which seemingly threatened in several instances (most notably that of Mr. Arp) to become permanent.

The lower portion of the street, lined with three and four story buildings of brick and stone, rather grim and hot facades under the midday sun, afforded little shade to the church comers, who were working homeward in processional little groups and clumps, none walking fast, though none with the appearance of great leisure, since neither rate of progress would have been esteemed befitting the day. The growth of Canaan, steady, though never startling, had left almost all of the churches downtown, and Main street the principal avenue of communication between them and the "residence section." So today the intermittent procession stretched along the new cement sidewalks from a little below the square to upper Main street, where maples lined the thoroughfare and the mansions of the affluent stood among pleasant lawns and shrubberies.

It was late, for this had been a communion Sunday, and those far in advance, who had already reached the pretty and shady part of the street, were members of the churches where services had been shortest, though few in the long parade looked as if they had been attending anything very short, and many heads of families were crisp in their replies to the theological inquiries of their offspring. The men imparted largely a gloom to the itinerant concourse, most of them wearing hot, long black coats and having wilted their collars, the ladies relieving this gloom somewhat by the lighter tints of their garments, the spick and span little girls relieving it greatly by their white dresses and their faces, the latter bright with the hope of Sunday ice cream, while the boys, experiencing some solace in that they were finally out where a person could at least scratch himself if he had to, yet oppressed by the decorous necessities of the day, marched along, furtively planning behind imperturbably secretive countenances various means for the later dispersal of an odious monotony.

Usually the conversation of this long string of the homeward bound was not too frivolous or worldly. Nay; it properly inclined to discussion of the sermon.

It was a serious and seemly Sunday parade, the propriety of whose behavior was today almost disintegrated when the lady of the bridge walked up the street in the shadow of a lacy lavender parasol carried by Joseph Louden. The congregation of the church across the square—that to which Joe's stepaunt had been late—was just debouching, almost in mass, upon Main street when these two went by. It is not quite the truth to say that all except the children came to a dead halt, but it is not very far from it. The air was thick with subdued exclamations and whisperings.

Here is no mystery. Joe was probably the only person of respectable derivation in Canaan who had not known for weeks that Ariel Tabor was on her way home. And the news that she had arrived the night before had been widely disseminated on the way to church, entering church, in church (even so!) and coming out of church. An account of her house in the Avenue Henri Martin and of her portrait in the Salon—a mysterious business to many and not lacking in grandeur for that—had occupied two columns in the Toesin on a day some months before when Joe had found himself inimically headlined on the first page and had dropped the paper without reading further. Ariel's name had been in the mouth of Canaan for a long time—unfortunately for Joe, however, not in the mouth of that Canaan which held converse with him.

Joe had not known her. The women recognized her infallibly at first glance, even those who had quite forgotten her. And the women told their men; hence the un-Sunday-like demeanor of the procession, for few towns hold it more unseemly to stand and stare at passersby, especially on the Sabbath. But Ariel Tabor returned—and walking with—with Joe Louden!

Ariel flushed a little when she perceived the extent of their conspicuousness, but it was not the blush that Joe remembered had reddened the tanned skin of old, for her brownness had gone long ago, though it had not left her merely pink and white. This was a delicate rosiness rising from her cheeks to her temples, as the earliest dawn rises. If there had been many words left in Joe he would have called it a divine blush. It fascinated him, and if anything could have deepened the glamour about her it would have been this blush. He did not understand it, but when he saw it he stumbled.

Those who gaped and stared were for him only blurs in the background. Truly, he saw "men as trees walking," and when it became necessary to step out to the curb in passing some clump of people it was to him as if Ariel and he, enchantedly alone, were working their way through underbrush in the woods.

He kept trying to realize that this lady of wonder was Ariel Tabor, but he could not. He could not connect the shabby Ariel, whom he had treated as one boy treats another, with this young woman of the world. He had always been embarrassed himself and ashamed of her when anything she did made him remember that, after all, she was a girl, as on the day he ran away when she kissed a lock of his hair escaping from the bandage. With that recollection even his ears grew red. It did not seem probable that it would ever happen again. The next instant he heard himself calling her "Miss Tabor."

At this she seemed amused. "You ought to have called me that years ago," she said, "for all you knew me."

"I did know her—you, I mean," he answered. "I used to know nearly everything you were going to say before you said it. It seems strange now"—

"Yes," she interrupted, "it does seem strange now."

"Somehow," he went on, "I doubt if now I'd know."

"Somehow," she echoed, with fine gravity, "I doubt it too."

Although he had so dim a perception of the staring and whispering which greeted and followed them, Ariel, of course, was thoroughly aware of it, though the only sign she gave was the slight blush, which very soon disappeared. That people turned to look at her may have been not altogether a novelty. A girl who had learned to appear unconscious of the continental stare, the following gaze of the boulevards, the frank glasses of the contanza in Rome, was not ill equipped to face Main street, Canaan, even as it was today.

Under the sycamores before they started they had not talked a great deal. There had been long silences, almost all her questions concerning the period of his runaway absence. She appeared to know and to understand everything which had happened since his return to the town. He had not, in his turn, reached the point where he would begin to question her. He was too breathless in his consciousness of the marvelous present hour. She had told him of the death of Roger Tabor, the year before. "Poor man!" she said gently. "He lived to see how the other fellows did it at last, and everybody liked him. He was very happy over there."

After a little while she had said that it was growing close upon lunch time; she must be going back.

"Then—then—goodby," he replied ruefully.

"Why?"

"I'm afraid you don't understand. It wouldn't do for you to be seen with me. Perhaps, though, you do understand. Wasn't that why you asked me to meet you out here beyond the bridge?"

In answer she looked at him full and straight for three seconds, then threw back her head and closed her eyes tight with laughter. Without a word she took the parasol from him, opened it herself, placed the smooth white coral handle of it in his hand and lightly took his arm. There was no further demur on the part of the young man. He did not know where she was going. He did not ask.

Once Ariel smiled politely, not at Mr. Louden, and inclined her head twice, with the result that the latter, after thinking for a time of how gracefully she did it and how pretty the top of her hat was, became gradually conscious of a meaning in her action—that she had bowed to some one across the street. He lifted his hat, about four minutes late, and discovered Mamie Pike and Eugene upon the opposite pavement walking home from church together. Joe changed color.

The sound of Ariel's voice brought him to himself.

"She is lovelier than ever, isn't she?"

"Yes, indeed," he answered blankly.

"Would you still risk"— she began, smiling, but, apparently thinking better of it, changed her question: "What is the name of your dog, Mr. Louden? You haven't told me."

"Oh, he's just a yellow dog," he evaded unskillfully.

"Young man!" she said sharply.

"Well," he admitted reluctantly, "I call him Speck for short."

"And what for long? I want to know his real name."

"It's mighty inappropriate, because we're fond of each other," said Joe, "but when I picked him up he was so yellow and so thin and so creeping and so scared that I christened him 'Respectability.'"

They were now opposite the Pike mansion, and, to his surprise, she turned, indicating the way by a touch upon his sleeve, and crossed the street toward the gate, which Mamie and Eugene had entered. Mamie, after exchanging a word with Eugene upon the steps, was already hurrying into the house.

Ariel paused at the gate as if waiting for Joe to open it.

"Don't you know?" she cried. "I'm staying here. Judge Pike has charge of all my property. He was the administrator or something." Then, seeing him chopfallen and aghast, she went on: "Of course you don't know. You don't know anything about me. You haven't even asked."

"You're going to live here?" he gasped.

"Will you come to see me?" she laughed. "Will you come this afternoon?"

He grew white. "You know I can't," he said.

"You came here once. You risked a good deal then just to see Mamie dance by a window. Don't you dare a little for an old friend?"

"All right," he gulped. "I'll try."

Mr. Bantry had come down to the gate and was holding it open, his eyes fixed upon Ariel, within them a rising glow. An impression came to Joe afterward that his stepbrother had looked very handsome.

"Possibly you remember me, Miss Tabor?" said Eugene in a deep and impressive voice, lifting his hat. "We were neighbors, I believe, in the old days."

She gave him her hand in a fashion somewhat mannerly, favoring him with a bright, negligent smile. "Oh, quite," she answered, turning again to Joe as she entered the gate. "Then I shall expect you?"

"I'll try," said Joe. "I'll try."

He stumbled away. Respectability and he together interfering alarmingly with the comfort of Mr. Flitcroft, who had stopped in the middle of the pavement to stare glassily at Ariel. Eugene accompanied the latter into the house, and Joe, looking back, understood. Mamie had sent his stepbrother to bring Ariel in—and to keep him from following.

"This afternoon!" The thought took away his breath, and he became paler.

CHAPTER XII.

MAMIE, waiting just inside the door as Ariel and Eugene entered, gave the visitor a pale greeting and a moment later, hearing the wheels of the brougham crunch the gravel of the carriage drive, hurried away down the broad hall and disappeared. Ariel dropped her parasol upon a marble topped table near the door and, removing her gloves, drifted into a room at the left, where a grand piano found shelter beneath crimson plush. After a moment of contemplation she pushed back the coverlet and, seating herself upon the plush covered piano stool (to match), let her fingers run up and down the keyboard once and fall listlessly in her lap as she gazed with deep interest at three life sized colored photographs in carved gilt frames upon the wall she was facing—Judge Pike, Mamie and Mrs. Pike, with her rubies.

"Please don't stop playing, Miss Tabor," said a voice behind her. She had not observed that Eugene had followed her into the room.

"Very well, if you like," she answered, looking up to smile absently at him, and she began to play a rakish little air which, composed by some rattlebrain at a cafe table, had lately skipped out of the Moulin Rouge to disport itself over Paris. She played it slowly in the minor, with elfish pathos, while he leaned upon the piano, his eyes fixed upon her fingers, which bore few rings—none, he observed with an unreasonable pleasure, upon the third finger of the left hand.

"It's one of those simpler Grieg things, isn't it?" he said, sighing gently. "I care for Grieg."

"Would you mind its being Chaminade?" she returned, dropping her eyes to cloak the sin.

"Ah, no; I recognize it now," replied Eugene. "He appeals to me even more than Grieg."

At this she glanced quickly up at him, but more quickly down again, and hastened the time emphatically, swinging the little air into the major.

"Do you play 'The Pilgrim's Chorus?'"

She shook her head.

"Vous name pas Wagner?" inquired Eugene, leaning toward her.

"Oh, yes," she answered, bending her head far over, so that her face was concealed from him, except the chin, which, he saw with a thrill of inexplicable emotion, was trembling slightly. There were some small white flowers upon her hat, and these shook too.

When she turned to him he was surprised to see that she looked astonishingly happy, almost as if she had been struggling with joy instead of pain.

"This chair," she said, sinking into it, "makes me feel at home."

Naturally he could not understand.

"Because," she explained, "I once thought I was going to live in it. It has been reupholstered, but I should know it if I met it anywhere in the world."

"How very odd!" exclaimed Eugene, staring.

"I settled here in pioneer days," she went on, tapping the arms lightly with her finger tips. "It was the last dance I went to in Canaan."

"I fear the town was very provincial at that time," he returned, having completely forgotten the occasion she mentioned, therefore wishing to shift the subject. "I fear you may still find it so. There is not much here that one is in sympathy with intellectually—few people really of the world."

"Few people, I suppose you mean," she said softly, with a look that went deep into his eyes—"few people who really understand one."

Eugene had seated himself on the sill of an open window close by. "There has been," he answered, with the ghost of a sigh, "no one."

Mamie appeared in the doorway, and Eugene rose swiftly. "I have been trying to persuade Miss Tabor," he explained, with something too much of laughter, "to play again. You heard that little thing of Chaminade's"—

Mamie did not appear to hear him. She entered breathlessly, and there was no color in her cheeks. "Ariel," she exclaimed, "I don't want you to think I'm a tale bearer"—

"Oh, my dear!" Ariel said, with a gesture of deprecation.

"No," Miss Pike went on, all in one breath, "but I am afraid you will think it, because papa knows, and he wants to see you."

"What is it that he knows?"

"That you were walking with Joseph Louden!" (This was as if she had said, "That you poisoned your mother.") "I didn't tell him, but when he saw you with him I was troubled and asked Eugene what I'd better do, because he always knows what is best."

(Mr. Bantry's expression, despite this tribute, was not happy.) "And he advised me to tell mamma about it and leave it in her hands. But she always tells papa everything"—

"Certainly; that is understood," said Ariel slowly, turning to smile at Eugene.

The daughter of the house exhibited signs of consternation. "He wants to see you," she repeated falteringly. "He's in the library."

Having thus discharged her errand, she hastened to the front door, which had been left open, and out to the steps, evidently with the intention of removing herself as soon and as far as possible from the vicinity of the library.

Eugene, visibly perturbed, followed her to the doorway of the room and paused.

"Do you know the way?" he inquired, with a note of solemnity.

"Where?" Ariel had not risen.

"To the library."

"Of course," she said, beaming upon him. "I was about to ask you if you wouldn't speak to the judge for me. This is such a comfortable old friend, this chair."

"Speak to him for you?" repeated the nonplused Eugene.

She nodded cheerfully. "If I may trouble you. Tell him certainly I shall be glad to see him."

Eugene went. There was nothing else to do. And he wished with every step that the distance to the portals of the library might have been greater.

In whatever guise he delivered the summons, it was perfectly efficacious. A door slammed, a heavy and rapid tread was heard in the hall, and Ariel, without otherwise moving, turned her head and offered a brilliant smile of greeting.

"It was good of you," she said as the doorway filled with red, imperial wrath, "to wish to have a little chat with me. I'm anxious, of course, to go over my affairs with you, and last night after my journey I was too tired. But now we might begin, not in detail, of course, just yet. That will do for later when I've learned more about business."

The great one had stopped on the threshold.

"Madam," he began coldly, "when I say my library I mean my"—

"Oh, yes," she interrupted, with amiable weariness; "I know. You mean you keep all the papers and books of the estate in there, but I think we'd better put them off for a few days"—

"I'm not talking about the estate!" he exclaimed. "What I want to talk to you about is being seen with Joseph Louden!"

"Yes," she nodded brightly. "That's along the line we must take up first."

"Yes, it is!" He hurled his bull bass at her. "You knew everything about him and his standing in this community! I know you did, because Mrs. Pike told me you asked all about him from Mamie after you came last night, and see here, don't you"—

"Oh, but I knew before that," she laughed. "I had a correspondent in Canaan, one who has always taken a great interest in Mr. Louden. I asked Miss Pike only to get her own point of view."

"I want to tell you, madam," he shouted, coming toward her, "that no member of my household"—

"That's another point we must take up today. I'm glad you remind me of it," she said thoughtfully, yet with so magically compelling an intonation that he stopped his shouting in the middle of a word, stopped with an apoplectic splutter. "We must arrange to put the old house in order at once."

"We'll arrange nothing of the sort," he responded after a moment of angry silence. "You're going to stay right here."

"Ah, I know your hospitality," she bowed graciously. "But of course I must not tax it too far. And about Mr. Louden? As I said, I want to speak to you about him."

"Yes," he intervened harshly, "so do I, and I'm going to do it quick! You'll find"—

Again she mysteriously baffled him. "He's a dear old friend of mine, you know, and I have made up my mind that we both need his help, you and I."

"What!"

"Yes," she continued calmly, "in a business way, I mean. I know you have great interests in a hundred directions, all more important than mine. It isn't fair that you should bear the whole burden of my affairs, and I think it will be best to retain Mr. Louden as my man of business. He could take all the cares of the estate off your shoulders."

Martin Pike spoke no word, but he looked at her strangely, and she watched him with sudden keenness, leaning forward in her chair, her gaze alert but quiet, fixed on the dilating pupils of his eyes. He seemed to become dizzy, and the choleric scarlet which had overspread his broad face and big neck faded spiotchily.

Still keeping her eyes upon him, she went on: "I haven't asked him yet and so I don't know whether or not he'll consent, but I think it possible that he may come to see me this afternoon, and if he does we can propose it to him together and go over things

*"It's one of those simpler Grieg things, isn't it?" he said.*